Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 258 pp.

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The New Transnational Activism represents an important attempt to extend the theoretical foundations of research on transnational dimensions of social movements. In this account, global politics is shaped by interactive relationships between states, international institutions, and non-state actors, and Tarrow argues that these relationships are best understood by exploring their underlying processes and mechanisms. In this sense, the book builds directly upon Tarrow's earlier *Dynamics of Contention* (*DOC*), which he co-authored with Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly. In a research field made up principally of edited collections and case studies, this more theoretically-driven account is refreshing.

Tarrow employs his great skill at synthesizing the work of many scholars to review an impressive array of cases of transnational activism. The efforts of Zapatistas, European women's rights lobbies, indigenous peoples, radical Islamic groups, Gandhians, labor activists, and others are analyzed for evidence about the processes and mechanisms of transnational activism. Chapters explore six key processes in transnational politics, both illustrating how each works and exploring what they convey about relationships between transnational activism, national politics, and broader global changes. Processes are organized according to whether they are domestic (global framing and internalization), transnational (diffusion and scale shift), or a fusion of the two (externalization and transnational coalition formation). Tarrow identifies, in the course of his analysis of the cases, several mechanisms shaping each process.

The book offers a rich and insightful discussion of much new research. And it provides what I think are some helpful concepts and theoretical insights that can generate new attempts at theory-building and hypothesis testing in the field. For instance, Tarrow's notion of the "rooted cosmopolitan" as a key player in transnational activism may encourage more attention to the role of individuals as bridges between local contexts and global politics. His reminder that we need to consider "internationalization" as a distinct type of global integration from economic globalization deserves restating, as does the observation that global integration expands possibilities for "venue shopping" by political agents.

While Tarrow develops some intriguing claims about the supposed relationships of various processes and mechanisms to broader social movement dynamics, I was frustrated at his failure in this book to test these claims more systematically. Perhaps as a result, I, along with earlier critics of *DOC*, remain unconvinced that efforts to elaborate typologies of mechanisms ("delimited class[es] of events that alter relations among specified elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations" [p. 29]) and processes ("recurring combinations of such mechanisms that can be observed in a variety of episodes of contentious politics [p.30]) will generate intellectual payoffs that justify the effort. The analytic distinctions seem to draw confusing and possibly misleading analytical boundaries between, for instance, national and international levels and between the different activities of political agents. Another source of confusion for

this reader was the author's selection of parings between particular mechanisms and processes. For instance, why talk about "socialization" as part of the process of transnational coalition building rather than alongside global framing? If mechanisms are said to recur in different movement contexts, more explicit discussion of the ways certain mechanisms affect different processes might have been helpful.

A related criticism is that, despite Tarrow's attention to social processes and interactions, there is no attempt to employ this process-oriented thinking as he looks toward the future of transnational activism. In particular, he resists the idea that global processes might be generating more extensive and durable possibilities for transnational politics in the future, particularly since September 11, 2001. The very title of the book signals—despite the author's caveat--a disconnect between "new" and historic transnational activism, and in many places Tarrow suggests that the recent surge in transnational activism is likely to be fleeting (e.g., p. 7, 44, 207, and elsewhere). This skepticism emerges from Tarrow's treatment of national and international political spheres as dichotomous, where one gains strength at the expense of the other. In chapter 4, for instance, evidence on European protests is used to argue that protesters are primarily targeting domestic institutions, even though more protests take aim at the EU after 1992. But since states are the key decision makers within international institutions, why would we *not* expect activists to target them? Further on, Eurobarometer data showing that many more respondents claimed a strong attachment to their country (90% or more) than to the EU (45%-58%) are used to demonstrate the persistent strength of domestic institutions. Again, I don't see any necessary connection between a strengthened sense of attachment to global level institutions and a diminished connection to national ones, and in places (e.g., p. 2) Tarrow also suggests the same. Expanding numbers of transnational organizations, events, and campaigns should encourage more brokers, more "rooted cosmopolitans," easier theorizing of global frames, and transnational socialization, thereby producing more rather than less transnational activism? Furthermore, if globalization and internationalization grow from very long-term processes of international cooperation and treaty-building, why should particular episodes of aggression be expected to derail these long-term complex and multi-faceted processes?

Tarrow's claim that transnational activism is likely to decline after September 11 is advanced without a theoretically grounded explanation for *why* we should expect this to happen. The fact that many U.S. and European activists have devoted more attention to resisting U.S. militarism since 9/11 is put forward as evidence that the state—and particularly the more powerful ones—remains the predominant actor in world affairs. However, evidence of sustained global justice activism-- such as participation in the World Social Forum process and continuing large and disruptive protests on global justice issues outside the U.S. (see, e.g., Podobnik 2004; Glasius et al. 2005)—is not considered. Elsewhere, Tarrow argues, citing just two or three case studies, that "transnational intervention fails more often than it succeeds" (p. 200). A considerable body of research suggests that this claim merits far more systematic attention before it can be stated with such certainty.

Nevertheless, Tarrow's assumptions about the resilience of the state and of the importance of 9/11 and the subsequent "war on terrorism" lead us to very important

questions for scholars of transnational activism. For instance, we must think more systematically about how U.S. power affects transnational social change prospects and strategic options. As Tom Mertes puts it, "[t]he real questions to be asked are not about the nation-states from which sovereignty is draining away, but the one it is being sucked into" (2004:241). We must also consider how militarism and war complicate transnational organizing. In sum, we have come to expect from Tarrow a broad theoretical vision that is always in search of new ways of making sense of diverse and complicated empirical materials. As a result, his work commands a wide audience and stimulates productive debate and discussion. In this book, despite its flaws, Tarrow does not disappoint us.

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References

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